



Hall Center names 2011 research, creative work fellows

The Hall Center For Humanities has announced its Humanities Research Fellows and Creative Works Fellow for 2011–12. Maria Carlson, Jill S. Kunheim, Dave Tell and Hui Faye Xiao were selected as research fellows. Tanya Hartman received the creative work fellowship.

Hall Center fellows are selected through a highly competitive process. Fellowships provide a semester of release time from teaching, an office in the Hall Center and a small research stipend. Research fellows often use the time to work on book manuscripts or large-scale works of art. All 2011-12 fellows will work on book projects during their semester of residence at the Hall Center.

Maria Carlson, professor of Slavic languages and literatures, will complete the manuscript "A Vampire by Any Other Name: The Corporeal Revenant in East Slavic Folk Belief." Her project examines the origins of the returning dead in pre-Christian, North European beliefs about "clean" and "unclean" dead. Using comparative Germanic, Norse, Slavic and central European evidence, her project examines early folk beliefs about death, the dead, the body, the soul and the nature of the afterlife preserved by East Slavic and Carpathian "ethnoi." Carlson's study incorporates folklore, ethnographic research, church and legal records and other materials in its exploration of these beliefs, which were encoded in the rituals surrounding the corporeal revenant of folklore. The beliefs shape our contemporary understanding of the "vampire."

Jill S. Kuhnheim, professor of Spanish and Portuguese, will work on "Poetry and Performance in Spanish America," a book project that examines poetry as an explicitly performative genre, reversing the once prevalent tradition that reduced the term poetry to the written lyric. Kuhnheim argues that while written texts give their readers one set of information, performed poetry provides a distinct kind of cultural-event record, often for a different audience. Studying poetry's "voicing" demonstrates how readers and performers appropriate texts and how poetry becomes a site of tension between authority and power (most often of the author and traditional roles for literature) and a possible place of subversion, re-creation and innovation. By examining instances of performance that range from early 20th century recitation and declamation to 21st century performances on film, CDs and the Internet, her study offers its readers a "sonorous reading" of the genre and a set of analytic tools with which to chart the circulation of poetry beyond texts.

Dave Tell, assistant professor of communication studies, will work on "Confessional Crises: Confession and Cultural Politics in Twentieth-Century America." The book examines the political consequences of labeling a text a confession. "Confessional Crises" are the public debates incited when a text that contains no confessional characteristics is labeled a confession for patently political purposes. These crises teach two counter-intuitive lessons about the political capacities of the genre of confession. First, they suggest any text — regardless of its composition, authorship or formal characteristics — can, if politically required, become a confession. Second, they suggest that the mere act of labeling a text a confession has been a powerful mode of intervening into American cultural politics. Specifically, the study argues that at specific points in the 20th century, labeling texts confessions has informed issues of sexuality, class, race, violence, religion and democracy.

Hui Faye Xiao, assistant professor of East Asian languages and cultures, will work on her first book project "Chinese-Style Divorces: Narratives of Gender, Class and Family in Contemporary Chinese Literature and Culture." The book will examine contemporary Chinese divorce narratives such as fiction, films and TV dramas, produced between 1980 and 2006. As the first full-length qualitative study of divorce narratives, her project will interrogate the ways in which these contribute to the reconfiguration of family ethics, gender/class difference and subject position parallel to the unprecedented socioeconomic transformation of contemporary China. In particular, the study will explore what China's increasing marketization, globalization and privatization imply for the reconstruction of female subjectivity of middle-aged female divorcees.

Tanya Hartman, associate professor of visual art, is the 2011–12 Creative Works Fellow. Throughout the past three years, Hartman has been interviewing survivors of torture and war trauma who are now living in the United States. Her new project, "So That I Might Carry You With Me," will provide the people whom she has met a forum in which to commemorate a loved one lost to persecution or violence. Each archived narrative will be presented on an embroidered field inspired by the aesthetic and tradition of the Asafo Flag, a Ghanaian textile tradition that Hartman studied while in Nungua, Ghana, in summer 2010. Each story that she has heard has the power to reveal both the brutality and the persevering goodness of the human heart. Thus, each word from each story will be treated reverently and will be individually cut from cloth and appliquéd to the painted and embellished surface of the flag. When complete, the project will be exhibited at Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Mo. More information about "So That I Might Carry You With Me" can be found at tanyahartmanart.com.



Maria Carlson



Tanya Hartman



Jill S. Kuhnheim



Dave Tell



Hui Faye Xiao

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